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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.



## THE BEST ROOM.

This article was awarded the First Prize in The Decorator and Furnisher Competition for an article on the Decoration of the Best Room of a Country House at a Moderate Cost.

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THE first thing to consider in the economical furnishing of a room is, the best disposition to make of resources at hand. A room in the country may be charmingly furnished by utilizing many odds and ends that are commonly overlooked or thrown aside.

Bare square rooms, without a cozy nook, are painfully common in the country, but I will show you one that has been transformed into the coziest retreat possible, and one that is within the financial reach of any one who has the plain room and a will to do.

My room was twenty feet square, ceiling nine feet high, three windows twenty inches from the floor, horrible fireplace, wide folding door, one outside door and one inside door, woodwork painted drab.

Resources: Poverty, strong hands; a fair knowledge of painting, carving and general decorative work; a crazy assortment of furniture, battered by many movings; odds and ends saved from different homes made during ten years of married life; a country store; a grove near by, but most valuable of all, a year's subscription to THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

The village carpenter made a partition across the room, three feet from the south side, leaving an opening opposite the outside door three feet wide by seven high, and one opposite the window five feet by seven high. I had the window there taken out and turned, making the length run east and west, and placed three feet from the floor, putting underneath it a seat eighteen inches high and seven feet long; at each end of the seat, running across the alcove from north to south shelves were placed, and nine feet from the east end a partition was put, cutting the long space in two, leaving a vestibule nine feet by three. As there was a space behind the outside door about three feet square, I had shelves put across—from north to south—the lower one high enough to place hooks beneath for wraps, etc. On the other side of the door there was room for hat rack and umbrella stand.

Within my main room I put corner shelves in the north-west corner, leaving space for a couch beneath them; low book shelves from the door to the partition; shelves above all the doors and windows. The top corner shelf (which was deeper than those beneath it), the bookcase, and all these shelves I finished myself with a railing made of spools about three inches apart, supporting a reglet stick, finished with a wooden button mold, through all of which I drove a nail that held them firmly in place.

In the upper part of windows and doors I had fitted grill frames made of molding. The grills I made of thin strips of wood woven together and fastened to the frames.

The mantel was a serious bugbear. But finally a cumbersome old bedstead, that would not stand upright in our low bedroom came to my relief. I cut the high top off. I found that the panels were screwed on to the back, so that when they were removed they left elegant frames for mirrors, which I soon had fastened in place. The panels made shelves, the foot-piece an elegant mantel board, and my over-mantel was satisfactory. The mantel face troubled me a long time, until one day my little boy brought in some lovely polished stones from a stream near by. "Eureka!" I cried, and while I ran to the bank with a market basket my carpenter made a shallow box to fit around the fire opening and to cover the entire face of the chimney. Some cement, a few tiles, that I had painted long before, and my mineral collection, completed my outfit.

Laying the box on the ground I filled it nearly full of cement, and arranged my tiles and stones. When the cement was thoroughly dry I painted all exposed cement with lamp black, and the box was placed in position by the carpenter, faced and finished with the rest of the bedstead. The hearth was laid in the same manner, and my mantel is certainly an artistic creation that I am proud of, and only cost me one dollar and fifty cents for carpenter's work. The mantel decided the color of the woodwork, which I was sorry to have black walnut—but I had the paint removed from the woodwork, the floor thoroughly cleaned, and as the bedstead was in excellent condition I made a hot dye with brown "Diamond Dye," to match it in color, and rubbed all the woodwork and the floor with it. The woodwork I finished with oil, the floor with beeswax and turpentine, and both

were satisfactory. I could find no suitable paper at the little store, but finally got some of the very cheapest brown-backed wall paper, and put it on wrong side out, putting glue in the paste to insure its sticking.

The frieze was of lighter brown, almost cream. This I decorated by laying pressed ferns, grasses and leaves on the paper in such a manner that they appeared to be growing naturally from the bottom when the frieze was in place. I then resorted to the very inartistic spatter work, long since confined to outer darkness by modern art workers. Here diamond dye and bronze powder again served my purpose—light blue at the top shading gradually into darker, and then bronze at the bottom. Here and there I painted a butterfly in bronze, and touched up my work with bronze, grasses, etc. I made about a yard of the frieze and then repeated the design, rolling it up as it dried, until I had enough to go around my room. When all was done I cut it into convenient strips and succeeded in pasting it firmly in place. A narrow molding at the top and a wider picture molding at the bottom completed my wall finish; the ceiling I had tinted a light cream color.

My carpet was brown, with a little peacock blue running through it. Of this I made a large square rug, leaving a margin of polished floor two feet wide all around it.

At the windows I hung long sash curtains of cheese cloth. From the lower edge of the grill short curtains of pongee, embroidered with leaves in browns; tassels of brown crewells.

The portieres are all dull blue serge, embroidered in bold designs, each different, of dogwood, woodbine and vari-colored branches of maple and chestnut.

The couch beneath the corner shelves is an old haircloth sofa, draped with an embroidered blue army blanket, and half concealed by long curtains falling from a pole attached to the upper shelf. Luxurious cushions, filled with odorous leaves, covered with blue denim, over which are drawn work covers, makes this corner a cozy one.

My chairs are mostly common rush bottoms, upholstered with odds and ends. One embroidered blue denim; another brown burlaps; another has a handsome cover made of old kid gloves; another you would never imagine was covered with an old grain bag—washed and painted with tapestry dyes, heavy fringe of the same, brass or leather headed nails, and it is complete.

Vases—some made of old cracked pitchers, decorated and varnished; some of tiles, made beautiful with raised figures of putty, clay, or papier mache—are upon the high door and window shelves, filled with treasures from the woods. A few plants, water colors framed in plain molding to match the woodwork, and other little nicknacks, which space forbids mentioning, but which are made of commonest materials, completes my cozy best room.

The hat rack in the vestibule I made of four sets of horns, polished and fastened to an oval board—an old table top; a small mirror in the centre between the horns, a little carving, and it was done. The umbrella holder is a decorated tile, standing in a bronzed tin pan. Card receiver, a flat beautifully tinted shell.

